



NEWS RELEASE

Guyana Preelection Statement

Atlanta (Aug. 19, 2025) — The Carter Center’s limited election observation mission in Guyana has observed key preelection activities, including nomination day and a series of campaign launches and campaign events, as part of its effort to assess electoral preparations and the political environment in Guyana in advance of the Sept. 1 elections. The mission has conducted meetings with stakeholders, including the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), key political parties, civil society leaders, business community leaders, members of the diplomatic community, and others.

This report provides a summary of observations to date. The mission will issue additional reports, including a preliminary report shortly after the election and a final comprehensive report in the months after the election, providing the Carter Center’s overall assessment and key recommendations.

Summary. The legal and electoral framework governing Guyana’s general and regional elections was amended in 2022 with the aim of improving the transparency of the tabulation process. Important changes also were made to voter registration. Concerns persist among some Guyanese stakeholders about issues such as the integrity of the voter list and the need for GECOM to improve public communications and engage with political parties. The Carter Center notes the ruling party has used state resources and benefited from biased state media coverage, undermining the equitable treatment of candidates. The Carter Center is concerned that only four of the six political parties contesting these elections signed the ERC code of conduct for political parties and strongly urges all parties to sign and uphold the code.

The Carter Center mission has noted that although political campaigning has been generally peaceful, several issues risk undermining the integrity of the electoral process, including local authorities’ approvals of campaign events, alleged intimidation of public workers, and overcompliance by local banks with recent U.S. sanctions, which threatens to hinder political participation. In addition, campaign finance continues to lack transparency — and, in the absence of clear regulations, media fairness remains a concern.

The Carter Center’s International Election Observation Mission in Guyana. The Center was invited in April 2024 to observe this year’s election by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. A four-person team of experts from the United States, Georgia, and the United Kingdom began arriving in

Georgetown on June 30, 2025. Additional electoral experts, observers, and delegation leadership will join them around election day. The Carter Center conducts election observation missions in accordance with the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and makes assessments based on relevant national legal frameworks as well as regional and international obligations for democratic elections. The Center characterizes its observation mission in Guyana as a “limited mission” because no long-term observers were deployed outside of Georgetown in the preelection period, and the limited time period covered prior to election day.

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

Legal Framework

The legal and electoral framework governing Guyana’s general and regional elections has undergone important reform since the country’s last national election in 2020, particularly in the areas of tabulation and voter registration. The most substantial changes include subdistrict tabulation in select regions; new requirements for simultaneous electronic public posting and transmission of polling station results; obligations of presiding officers to ensure openness during the closing and counting procedures; designated cycles for continuous registration; the end of “house-to-house” registration; and updated requirements for removal of the deceased from the voter list. While these changes are welcome, the majority of the recommendations made by The Carter Center and other international observers following the 2020 election remain unaddressed. In addition, these changes to the legal framework are not well understood by Guyana’s civil society and some opposition political parties.

Tabulation. New administrative arrangements have been introduced to the Representation of the People’s Act (RoPA) that decentralize the tabulation process to the subdistrict level in the three most populous regions (regions 3, 4, and 6). Each of these subdistricts will have a supernumerary returning officer to perform functions within the subdistricts similar to those carried out at the district level by returning officers. Tabulation will now take place at a total of 17 locations across Guyana’s 10 electoral districts. The amendments provide for the immediate online publication of Statements of Poll (SoPs) and tabulation forms, and the electronic display of each SoP during the tabulation process. The amendments also reinforce the rights of party agents to observe all stages of the process. Severe penalties were introduced for violations, including noncompliance with the new provisions, such as failing to publish information, delivering false information, not providing certified copies to superiors, or obstructing party agents. While these changes could provide greater transparency, The Carter Center calls on GECOM to publish detailed tabulation procedures for the public as soon as possible.

Voter Registration. RoPA and the National Registration Act (NRA) were amended to remove residency requirements for voter eligibility. The NRA was further revised to discontinue house-to-house registration,

establish registration primarily at designated offices, and introduce a two-phase annual registration process not tied to a specific electoral cycle. In 2025, the High Court reaffirmed that residency is not a constitutional requirement for voting, including for the regional elections.¹ A noteworthy 2021 amendment to the Registration of Births and Deaths Act allows adults who lack a birth certificate to be issued one based on certain documents, including a declaration by a “person of high standing in the community,” including a Toshao in indigenous communities, where lack of documentation has historically been a problem. Adjustments were also made to enable GECOM to coordinate with a wider range of officials to verify deaths and remove names from the register accordingly.

Other amendments. While the most notable legal changes relate to tabulation and voter registration, other provisions were also modified, including requirements for election manuals to be provided to parties and posted online within 30 days of the proclamation of the election date, additional provisions for recount requests, and a mandate for the Chief Elections Officer (CEO) to prepare a report within 12 hours of the calculation of results. This report will serve as the basis for the commission’s declaration. Another new legal provision seeks to enhance electoral participation of persons with disabilities, mandating that when decisions are being made about subdividing polling places, the accessibility of polling stations should be taken into consideration.

Voter Registration and the Voter List

The Official List of Electors (OLE) for the 2025 election was released on July 30 and includes a total of 757,690 voters — 376,703 men and 380,987 women. The Carter Center did not observe voter registration and has not assessed the quality of the voter list.

In accordance with the amendments to the legal framework made in 2022, voter registration is now “continuous,” and takes place in two distinct periods every year. From January to May, and then again from July to November, individuals can visit GECOM offices to register as a new voter or make changes to their registration details, including their name or address. After each period of registration and modification, there is a month (June and December) dedicated to the production of a Preliminary List of Electors and a “claims and objections” period in which registered voters can challenge other voters’ registrations or amend their own. Following this period, a final Official List of Electors is produced, which is valid for six months after it is certified.

¹ For regional elections, it found that while the constitution refers to persons “residing in the region,” this language does not impose a substantive residency requirement but reflects the address declared by the voter at registration. Accordingly, voters must vote in the region where they are registered. While practical and inclusive, there is a need to further refine constitutional and legislative language to ensure consistency in this area.

GECOM conducted an abbreviated “claims and objections” exercise for the 2025 election from June 16-22. During this period, GECOM received a total of 6,563 claims and four objections. GECOM ultimately certified the Official List of Electors on July 29. Commendably, the OLE is available on GECOM’s website with searchable features and will be publicly displayed in all 10 regions.

Many interlocutors have raised concerns about the size of the OLE at 757,690.² The government conducted a new census in 2022, but the results have not been released. This regrettable lapse obscures public understanding of basic population demographics and their potential relation to the size of the voter list.

Following the recent court decisions and legislative changes, registered voters cannot be removed from the list on the grounds that they no longer reside in the country. While recent changes to the legal framework sought to be responsive to past concerns about removal of the deceased from the list and an expansion of GECOM’s ability to engage with a wider range of agencies, further efforts are required in this area. These factors contribute to the size of the list. While the relative size of the OLE raises concerns for many Guyanese, The Carter Center has not received evidence of inflation of the voter roll.

Electoral Preparations

Nomination day was held by GECOM on July 14, and six of the seven parties that submitted candidate lists were ultimately approved to contest the election.

GECOM is preparing to open 2,790 polling stations in 1,128 polling places. Recruitment of polling staff is underway. So far 11,718 polling staff have been drawn from a pool of candidates previously identified by the commission and will be given refresher training prior to the election. Ballots were printed in Canada and have arrived in Guyana. The procurement of other sensitive materials is reportedly well underway.

Many of the Carter Center’s interlocutors expressed concerns that GECOM is not communicating effectively with the broader public and political contestants, particularly beyond the two main parties. While the commission has been issuing regular press releases and maintains an active presence on social media, The Carter Center recommends that GECOM engage the press regularly and predictably in advance of election day and throughout the tabulation process to inform the public about the status of its preparations. Given the lack of public understanding of the tabulation process in particular, The Carter Center urges GECOM to clearly communicate tabulation procedures to enhance confidence in the process.

² Guyana’s last census results from 2012 estimated the country’s total population as 746,955 people. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated the population at 826,353 in 2023, and in 2025, Worldometer estimated the population at 836,639 based on U.N. figures.

GECOM currently lacks a legal officer and, in the absence of one, has at times sought advice from the Attorney General (AG), which in some interlocutors' eyes undermines the commission's impartiality. There may be questions for which it is appropriate to consult the Ministry of Legal Affairs, of which the AG is the subject minister. However, because the AG is a political appointee and a candidate in these elections, seeking legal advice from his office raises questions about conflict of interest. The Carter Center welcomes the commission's recent action to recruit a new legal officer and calls on the commissioners to take prompt action to ensure that it has adequate legal representation in the event of any legal challenges to the process.

Campaign Environment

Campaign Period. All of the political parties approved to contest the election are campaigning across the country. To date, the campaign has proceeded in a generally peaceful manner with no major incidents of violence, although some confrontations at public meetings and overheated rhetoric have been reported. There also have been some videos posted on social media of flags of one party being removed and replaced by those of another party. Political parties should instruct their supporters to refrain from these and other similar behaviors, as such incidents can escalate and infringe upon the right of people to organize and assemble in an environment free from fear.

Posters, billboards, and party flags are on wide display, and the parties are holding everything from large rallies to smaller public meetings. The Center has received complaints from new parties regarding delays in approval from the police for campaign events and notes that the police have indicated that they intend to approve campaign requests quickly.

The Carter Center notes with concern that the We Invest in Nationhood (WIN) presidential candidate has been denied interior airline service for campaign flights and reports that the party in some instances has been denied use of local public areas for campaign meetings. These campaign issues raise concerns about equal application of the rights of freedom of association.

Code of Conduct. On Aug. 5, political parties gathered to sign a code of conduct agreement developed by Guyana's Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), in which parties committed to peaceful campaigns, avoidance of hate speech and ethnically divisive rhetoric, and prioritization of the nation over any political party. The Carter Center notes that two political parties, A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) and Forward Guyana Movement (FGM), have not signed the code of conduct. The Center calls on all parties to sign the code and to commit to its principles, which reflect the laws of Guyana and recognized international standards for democratic elections. The Carter Center further calls on all political parties to abide by Guyanese law and international standards for democratic elections in avoiding hate speech and encouraging peaceful political participation of all party supporters.

Freedom of Association and Reports of Intimidation. Freedoms of opinion and expression, as well as freedom of association and assembly, are essential elements of the right of political participation.³ The Carter Center has received allegations from opposition and new parties of an atmosphere of fear among public sector workers, local business owners, and community members, who are concerned about losing their jobs or future economic opportunities if they do not display support for the ruling party. In two instances reported to The Carter Center, an employee of Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and a police corporal appear to have been transferred to new posts after encounters with WIN's presidential candidate. The Carter Center is also concerned about reports from the Guyana Press Association of attempts to censor and intimidate journalists by government officials, opposition candidates, and party supporters.

The Center urges all political parties and state bodies to respect the rights of individuals to associate freely and calls on all parties to refrain from any actions that could be construed as intimidation or victimization.

The Right to be Elected and the Right to Political Participation. Equitable treatment of candidates and political parties during elections, and the maintenance of an open and transparent campaign environment, are critical to ensuring the integrity of democratic elections and the right of every citizen to be elected. This right is a universal one and requires that states ensure that their citizens have the opportunity to run for elected office, free from unreasonable restrictions.

In June 2024, the U.S. government [sanctioned](#) WIN presidential candidate Azruddin Mohamed, his father Nazar Mohamed, several of their businesses, and Guyanese government official Mae Thomas Jr. for public corruption. The U.S. Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) blocked Mohamed's assets in the U.S. financial system, and aimed to prevent transactions of money, goods, and services that would benefit Mohamed or the others within the U.S. financial system.

Following approval of WIN's list in July 2025, three local commercial banks reportedly closed the personal bank accounts of approximately 40 WIN candidates, party members, and their associates. Reportedly, some candidates also have been dismissed by private-sector employers for appearing on WIN's list. Although the banks have not provided a detailed public explanation of their actions, they are reportedly concerned about secondary sanctions and their banking relationships with the U.S. financial system.

The Guyanese banking system operates within national laws and international regulatory standards to prevent the misuse of the international financial system. While the Center recognizes the banking sector's caution, the relevant Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and [OFAC standards](#) and guidelines recommend a "[risk-based](#)" approach to such matters and discourages overcompliance with practices such as blanket account closures

³ U.N., ICCPR, Article 26. U.N. (CCPR), General Comment 25.

(“[de-risking](#)”). The relevant practice indicates that the risk of secondary sanctions arises when there is a prohibited transaction or other significant dealing with a sanctioned person. Mere political association, without evidence of such transactions or facilitation, does not constitute the proper basis for termination of accounts. The Carter Center is concerned that banks may be over-complying with U.S. sanctions, which undermines political participation and electoral integrity by discouraging people from participating fully in the political process. The private sector has an important role to play in safeguarding democratic rights and freedoms and, as such, must ensure decisions do not discriminate against individuals for exercising those rights.

Campaign Finance. Guyana lacks an effective framework or mechanism to ensure transparency or accountability in campaign financing. This contributes to disparities between campaigns and potentially limits voters’ ability to make informed choices. Guyana has campaign expenditure ceilings — which need revision — and a requirement for political parties to submit postelection financial reports to GECOM within 35 days of the declaration of results, and for their subsequent publication by the CEO. However, there are no effective enforcement mechanisms for these regulations, and the law lacks provisions regulating donations and expenditures, or mechanisms to ensure transparency to the public in advance of election day. While legal amendments in this area remain necessary, GECOM should at a minimum remind political parties to comply with existing reporting requirements within the legally prescribed timeframe as a step toward fostering a culture of transparency and accountability.

Misuse of State Resources and State Media. The Carter Center has received multiple allegations from political parties and civil society that the ruling party has misused state resources. Social media and news reports are also rife with photographs suggestive of this problem. The use of state resources for party campaigning runs contrary to Guyana’s international obligations with respect to campaign finance.⁴

The Carter Center has received reports alleging that the ruling party has used state-owned vehicles to campaign and taken advantage of “10-day workers” (employed part-time by the government) in campaign activities. Official government statements about the opening of schools and other public buildings regularly feature public officials in full ruling-party regalia, blurring the line between the state and the party. Since July 30, the president has announced he would promote over 2,800 Guyana Police Force officers. On Aug. 1, the government announced that bridge crossings would now be free. These and similar measures can be seen to afford the ruling party an unfair advantage. While Guyana’s laws do not prohibit new government spending after an election is called, such spending runs contrary to international standards and best practices intended to ensure a level playing field.

⁴ States must take measures to prevent corruption. Treaty obligations establish the general requirement and indicate that States shall promote transparency in public decision making as a means of combating corruption. U.N. Convention Against Corruption, articles 18 and 13.

Although The Carter Center is not conducting systematic media monitoring, the mission has noted and received reports indicating that state media coverage appears to be biased in favor of the ruling party. Several political parties reported limited access to state media, with their events receiving little or no coverage, and one party alleged they were denied the opportunity to place advertisements in state media. In the absence of specific legal provisions regulating media conduct during the electoral period, The Carter Center encourages state media to provide equal treatment to all political parties.

Access to Public Information

Access to information is a critical means of ensuring informed public participation, and transparency and accountability in the electoral process. Elections conducted in the absence of adequate public access to information, including on key election related matters, harm the electoral process. A well-informed electorate is essential to any electoral process and is an essential building block of a meaningful democracy.⁵

Cumulative shortcomings, such as timely completion and publication of the census, the absence of campaign and party finance data, limited information around GECOM decision-making, and obstacles faced by some media outlets and citizens in obtaining public information, constitute a lack of adequate public access to election-relevant information. The U.N. Human Rights Committee, in its May 2024 report, noted concerns that the commissioner of information does not respond to all requests and urged Guyana to ensure the right of access to information is effectively exercised.

The Carter Center in Guyana.

The Carter Center has worked in Guyana since 1991 to strengthen democracy, support civil society, encourage sustainable development, and reinforce the rule of law. The Carter Center is a recognized leader in the international election observation community and has conducted 125 election observation missions globally, including in Guyana in 1992, 2001, 2006, 2015, and 2020. In addition to work on elections, The Carter Center has conducted a range of activities in Guyana, including helping Guyanese articulate a comprehensive vision and development strategy; supporting civil society groups working to advance the status of women, youth, and Amerindians; assisting judicial system reform programs in partnership with the High Court, the chief justice, the Guyana Bar Association, and the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers; facilitating conflict resolution efforts in support of peace and political dialogue; and supporting government, industry, and civil society stakeholders to comply with the requirements of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

⁵ U.N. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 25(b). U.N. Human Rights Council, General Comment 25, “the Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights, and the Right to Equal Access to Public Service,” para. 11.